

Auntyji Ko Pucho

By: Auntyji

Auntyji is back with a vengeance. She has lately been kind enough to not talk about herself, and has selflessly concentrated on her readers. She now needs to change things and they are going to be different. She has spent the last couple of months with a lot of friends and family (you know how it is being in Florida), and has made a lot of interesting observations about human nature (especially the *desi* kind). Being the wise (and caustic) woman that she is, she is going to share her take on life with you.

Let us start with the people who fall in her age bracket. Most of the *desis* that fall in this category are financially stable or fairly rich. They have fancy cars, a large house and a fair amount of money at their disposal. To their credit, most of them are providing security for their families and a good education for their children. Their ultimate goal in life seems to be pleasure from making more money, watching it grow, and buying things for their families.

How about moving away from that for a minute and trying to explore what else is out there? Since they are so conditioned to this life that they lead, they seem reluctant to give any alternative a chance. Let's start with food as an example – they will indulge in home cooked food, may go out sometimes for Indian food or a quick stop for Pizza, Chinese, or Mexican food. Why not give French, Vietnamese, or Argentinean cuisines a try? Why not try to develop a taste for wines or martinis instead of the regular old whiskey or scotch? You might not like everything you try but at least you gave it a chance and you might discover a whole other treat for your taste buds.

How many *desis* go to the museum or take in an evening of an orchestra performance - and going for your child's school orchestra performance does not count here! It is not a matter of being Western or Eastern - this is about appreciation of Art. A lot is about enriching ourselves which does not involve "I am enriched with the company of my children and grandchildren". Experience an evening of ballet or opera or relax at a yoga class. It is all about opening your mind and broadening your horizons.

Just the other day Auntyji was with this doctor who was planning on giving up this noble profession to start stock trading because he could make more money that way. And then there was this other woman who makes annual trips to India for the past ten years, but has never cared or bothered to explore any other part of the world. Another friend of Auntyji is so caught up in money that she is not willing to date anyone who might not be her financial equal. To illustrate what Auntyji is talking about, look at the following letter she received.

Q. *Dear Auntyji, I have been in this country for over 15 years and have been busy raising my children and taking care of my family. My children are now in college and my husband is busy with his work. I have started to get very bored at home even though I volunteer at the library, at a local hospital and am very active within the Indian community as well. I feel empty inside - as if my whole life has been about other people. I want to give more time to myself but don't know how to do it. I don't mean that I want to pamper myself - I just want to do something that will give ME happiness and a feeling of fulfillment. I am an educated and confident woman but don't know which direction to take my life into. Can you help me? Kaveri from Coral Springs, FL.*

A. How can someone in Kaveri's situation be so alone when she gave of herself to others without taking care of her own needs? Life should be about "ME" also. Go explore what the world has to offer. Learn a new language. Go on an impulsive trip. Start a hobby, or better still, start a business that you might really enjoy. Sometimes it is hard to start taking care of ourselves, but it is very important that we do. We must recognize our needs and satisfy them and take care of our pleasures too. Money has value only if it is used effectively. *Arrey behen*, it is time to step out of your cocoon and turn into a butterfly. Life will pass you by too quickly – you need to start living it rather than observing it.

On the other hand, the younger generation seems to have embraced life. They are taking the best of what both cultures can offer, immersing their kids into it, and thereby getting exposed to it themselves. Earning money is important, but so is en-

joying simple pleasures like eating out, traveling, and going for art shows. Enroll your children in ballet, classical music or a theater group. Visit museums, and spend time together over activities rather than sitting in front of the television. When the next generation grows up, hopefully they would have been exposed to all the wonderful things this life and country can offer.

Here is a time when maybe the older generation can learn from the younger one. Just let go for a moment. It is hard, especially when you have been required and conditioned to work hard all your life. Step out of your safe and familiar surroundings and start exploring the unknown. Think only about yourself for a minute, your pleasure and then do the unexpected. You might not like it but at least you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you tried it!

Q. *Dear Auntyji, my friend told me to write to you because you give really good advice. I am a 15 year old girl who is very over-weight. I have tried a lot of diets and my mother is always on my case to lose weight. It's not like I don't realize that I need to lose weight - it's just that it's SO difficult. I love eating and it gives me a lot of comfort after a hard day at school. I don't know if it is psychological - I am pretty well adjusted and have gone to school with the same bunch of kids since elementary school. No one teases me that much and I don't feel like an outcast. I do feel envious of my skinny friends especially when I see them wear the latest trends with ease and comfort, but then I comfort myself with some food! I know this is a bad cycle and that I may have an eating disorder. I have joined the gym but don't feel motivated enough to go for a work-*

out everyday - it's such a struggle. Can you give me some advice that will bring me the motivation I need? Sunaina, FL.

Sunaina dear, everybody is different. Some tend to be more skinny, others more plump, and one must learn to live with the body type one has. Being overweight however is not a very healthy thing. Trying to lose weight when one loves food can be very difficult. You mentioned that you might have an eating disorder too, which can create serious health risks, and you should definitely talk to a doctor about it.

What Auntyji suggests is to consult a dietician, either at school or at the gym, who can help you chart out a healthy diet that is practical to maintain. Get your parents involved with your resolution to get healthy. You need to look at it as a life style change rather than as a diet. You need to exercise also, and maybe hiring a trainer, or getting a friend to go with you might motivate you. Do not try to attempt too much all at once. Start with light activities like getting on the treadmill with your iPod, which might seem not so difficult. Over time you can add to this by challenging your body a little more.

And honey, have realistic goals. You are a wonderful girl, and being skinny or overweight will not change that. Being healthy and having good eating habits is very important. You can always fit into another dress and still look nice. So go ahead and focus on being healthier rather than skinnier. With the right attitude and perseverance, you will be able to achieve that.

Don't forget, life is short - live it to the fullest with attitude! Auntyji@citymasala.com.

